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## Research on Canadian Public Libraries' Participation in Cultural Poverty Alleviation and Its Implications: Postprint

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### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] This study examines the cultural poverty alleviation practices of Canadian public libraries and distills their implications for targeted cultural poverty alleviation in Chinese public libraries. [Method/Process] The research reviews poverty alleviation-related strategic documents from Canadian provinces and territories to investigate the policy orientation and value embodiment of Canadian public libraries' involvement in cultural poverty alleviation. Employing case analysis methodology, it selects four representative Canadian public libraries as primary research subjects, and systematically summarizes their service modalities and exemplary practices in universal multiliteracy education for all citizens, learning and health support for children and adolescents, cultural and employment assistance for new immigrants, and support services for persons with disabilities. [Results/Conclusion] The study proposes beneficial implications for Chinese public libraries' participation in targeted cultural poverty alleviation: deepening the concept of social inclusion to foster an open and equitable service environment for impoverished populations; expanding the cooperative framework of poverty alleviation actors to construct a multi-institutional joint poverty alleviation system; and integrating foreign experiences with local realities to promote the optimization and enhancement of targeted cultural poverty alleviation content.

### Full Text

## Research on and Enlightenment from Canadian Public Libraries' Participation in Cultural Poverty Alleviation

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**Abstract:** *[Purpose/Significance]* This study examines the cultural poverty alleviation practices of Canadian public libraries to derive insights for China's public libraries in implementing targeted cultural poverty alleviation. *[Method/Process]* By reviewing poverty alleviation strategy documents from Canadian provinces and territories, this paper explores the policy orientation and value manifestation of Canadian public libraries' involvement in cultural poverty alleviation. Using case analysis, four representative Canadian public libraries were selected as primary research subjects to summarize service forms and exemplary cases in universal multi-literacy education, learning and health care for children and adolescents, cultural and employment support for new immigrants, and security services for persons with disabilities. *[Result/Conclusion]* The study proposes beneficial enlightenment for Chinese public libraries: deepening the concept of social inclusion to create an open and equal service environment for impoverished groups; expanding the cooperation framework of poverty alleviation practitioners to construct a multi-agency joint poverty alleviation system; and combining foreign references with local realities to optimize and improve the content of targeted cultural poverty alleviation.

**Keywords:** Canada; public libraries; cultural poverty alleviation

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Poverty is a persistent challenge to sustainable development worldwide, drawing widespread international attention. In 2000, the United Nations included poverty eradication among its eight Millennium Development Goals. In 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which established “ending poverty in all its forms everywhere” as one of 17 Sustainable Development Goals [1]. At the 2019 UN Summit on the SDGs, member states reaffirmed their commitment to achieving this objective. Poverty is a complex social concept involving economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions. Its manifestations extend beyond hunger, insufficient income, limited access to healthcare, and inadequate housing to include cultural poverty resulting from inability to access public cultural services such as education and reading—phenomena that exist even in developed nations. In response, the Canadian government established the National Advisory Council on Poverty and officially released *Opportunity for All—Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy* in 2018, the country's first national-level poverty reduction strategy, which set a primary goal of reducing poverty by 20% by 2020 compared to 2015 levels [2].

Following President Xi Jinping's proposal of “targeted poverty alleviation,” Chinese public libraries have shifted their focus from general cultural poverty alleviation to “targeted cultural poverty alleviation.” This represents the application of targeted poverty alleviation principles in the cultural domain, characterized by: (1) more precise identification of target populations through in-depth assessment of impoverished individuals' characteristics and accurate identification of regions and groups lacking resources and cultural services; (2) more targeted

measures through one-on-one assistance, customized resources, and categorized guidance; and (3) more comprehensive management mechanisms covering objectives, needs, resources, talent teams, and safeguards. Building upon research on Chinese public libraries' poverty alleviation models [4-5], case studies [6], and pathways [7], scholars have deepened investigations into influencing factors [8], optimization strategies [9], and innovative mechanisms [10] for targeted cultural poverty alleviation. However, research from international perspectives remains limited, focusing primarily on African libraries [11-12] with scarce attention to developed countries like Canada. This study therefore examines Canadian public libraries, selecting four representative institutions—Toronto Public Library (Canada's largest system, which explicitly supports municipal poverty reduction strategies in its 2016-2019 strategic plan), Ottawa Public Library (which plays an exemplary role in cultural poverty alleviation in the capital), Vancouver Public Library (located in British Columbia, which integrates urban poverty reduction into its Healthy City Strategy), and Edmonton Public Library (which made poverty elimination a strategic goal for 2014-2018 [13]). These libraries operate in provinces with high development levels and provincial poverty reduction strategies, providing comprehensive social support for cultural poverty alleviation. This research analyzes Canadian public libraries' policy orientation and systematically examines the practices and exemplary cases of these four libraries to offer valuable references for Chinese public libraries' current targeted cultural poverty alleviation efforts.

## 2. Policy Orientation and Value Manifestation of Canadian Public Libraries' Participation in Cultural Poverty Alleviation

### 2.1 Policy Orientation

Canadian public libraries' cultural poverty alleviation practices since the 21st century have been guided by national poverty reduction policies, which can be divided into two phases. **Phase 1 (2002-2015): Provincial and Territorial Initiatives.** Canada's ten provinces and three territories possess autonomy in poverty reduction planning and all released relevant strategies before the federal government, achieving 100% coverage. In 2002, Quebec's Ministry of Employment, Social Solidarity and Family Welfare issued the nation's first poverty policy statement, *National Strategy to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion*, identifying libraries as venues for knowledge and cultural access [14]. In 2004, Quebec released the first comprehensive action plan under this framework, *Reconciling Freedom and Social Justice: A Challenge for the Future*, stating that libraries could provide reading and writing activities for impoverished children and families [15]. Subsequently, Newfoundland and Labrador (2006), Ontario (2008), and Nova Scotia (2009) released their strategies [16], with Saskatchewan completing its plan in 2013 as the final province. The three territories also completed their planning during 2002-2015. Table 1 details these provincial and territorial poverty reduction strategies.

**Phase 2 (2016-Present): Federal Strategic Leadership.** The federal government affirmed provincial efforts, engaged in discussions with relevant departments, released a discussion paper in October 2016, established a ministerial advisory committee in September 2017, and formally launched the national strategy in 2018, followed by the *Poverty Reduction Act* in 2019. During this period, some provinces also updated their strategic plans, with public libraries' roles in cultural poverty alleviation becoming increasingly prominent. Overall, federal, provincial, and territorial poverty reduction policies provide foundational strategic support and practical guidance for Canadian public libraries, enabling them to identify target groups and deliver quality cultural assistance programs in education, employment, housing, health, and disability support based on policy objectives, visions, and priorities.

## 2.2 Value Manifestation

Canadian public libraries serve as crucial partners in government poverty alleviation actions, maintaining close collaboration as public service organizations. *Opportunity for All—Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy* explicitly states that libraries, as public cultural spaces, provide cultural resources for low-income families and bear indispensable responsibilities in improving national literacy rates and supporting cultural education for low-income populations. Libraries can act as either lead agencies or important participants in poverty alleviation projects, assisting other departments through various forms of engagement. For example, the federal government's *Digital Literacy Exchange Program* is listed as a poverty alleviation initiative, with public libraries participating through both financial sponsorship and digital literacy activities. Canadian public libraries have achieved notable results in cultural poverty alleviation, expanding service coverage and intensity, with various cultural assistance activities extending to more low-income communities. Toronto Public Library, for instance, increased access for impoverished groups through branch expansion, extended operating hours, and infrastructure investment, adding 1,036 hours of Sunday service in low-income communities in 2020. New Brunswick Public Library strongly supports federal initiatives addressing child poverty by innovating reading readiness activities for children and adolescents from impoverished families.

## 3. Practice of Canadian Public Libraries' Participation in Cultural Poverty Alleviation

This study analyzes the target populations of Canadian public libraries' cultural poverty alleviation and selects Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa, and Edmonton public libraries as research subjects. Data were collected through Canadian government websites and the four libraries' official websites to analyze their service forms and exemplary cases across four dimensions.

### 3.1 Target Population Analysis

The federal poverty reduction strategy's fourth chapter, "Opportunity and Inclusion," emphasizes that poverty reduction involves not only providing necessities but also ensuring equal opportunities for all groups to fully participate in social life. Based on this requirement, Canadian public libraries' cultural poverty alleviation primarily targets: (1) **Children**: Economic burdens on low-income and single-parent families affect children's healthy development, with approximately 9% of children living in poverty in 2017. Reducing child poverty is a key Canadian objective. (2) **Elderly**: Beyond economic security, cultural provisions must ensure seniors receive adequate attention. Ottawa Public Library partners with Ottawa Public Health on the "Aging Well Together" project, connecting hospitals and community organizations to provide inclusive reading and health services for seniors. (3) **Indigenous Peoples**: Affected by Canada's colonial history, indigenous peoples lag behind in development. The strategy emphasizes providing quality cultural poverty alleviation services in education, skills training, and reading. Edmonton Public Library creates digital public spaces for indigenous peoples to share cultural resources and enhance cultural confidence through assistance activities. (4) **Youth with Low Literacy**: 2015 Statistics Canada data show that 10.7% and 14.4% of 15-year-olds lack adequate literacy and numeracy skills, respectively, hindering future learning and employment. (5) **New Immigrants**: Lacking social networks and labor market access, new immigrants often face employment difficulties and reduced income. With 8.3% of new immigrants living in deep poverty in 2015, libraries provide extensive cultural and employment support. (6) **Persons with Disabilities**: Recognized as a vulnerable group in Canada, 20.4% of persons with disabilities had low incomes in 2016. Public libraries provide cultural security services for this population.

Chinese public libraries commonly target low-income families, persons with disabilities, elderly populations, rural residents in remote areas, and migrant workers. Both countries adapt target identification to their cultural development contexts. As an immigrant nation with a complex population structure, Canada must consider different ethnic groups' linguistic and cultural backgrounds in identifying targets, giving its cultural poverty alleviation a more diverse character compared to China's approach.

### 3.2 Universal Multi-Literacy Education

**3.2.1 Service Forms** The Canadian poverty reduction strategy defines "literacy" as reading and writing knowledge and skills for social participation. Chinese scholars collectively term related competencies as "multi-literacy" [17]—abilities in cognition, learning, reading, thinking, information discrimination, and knowledge creation developed through theoretical learning and knowledge accumulation. Multi-literacy deficiency leads to learning incapacity, insufficient creativity, and social exclusion that can cause poverty [18]. Universal multi-literacy education helps the public acquire knowledge and skills, promotes social equal-

ity and inclusion, meets cultural and employment needs, and eliminates cultural poverty [19]. Canadian public libraries' multi-literacy education covers financial, scientific, digital, language, adult, family, media, and food literacy through programs such as financial literacy initiatives, Science Literacy Week, Digital Inclusion Week, and Family Literacy Day.

Common activity types include: (1) **Seminars:** The most common format, including workshops, club activities, and group sessions that facilitate knowledge transfer through face-to-face interaction and bidirectional communication. (2) **Training Courses:** Primarily for seniors and adults, covering computer/technology training, software production, language instruction, and coding. Vancouver Public Library regularly offers computer courses and specialized one-on-one services. (3) **Practical Demonstrations:** Toronto and Ottawa public libraries provide 3D printing, laser cutting, and science experiment demonstrations. Ottawa Public Library collaborates with high schools on a food literacy program, growing vegetables with students to promote practical understanding. (4) **Experiential Activities:** Including exhibitions and virtual reality experiences that utilize physical and virtual resources and equipment. Table 2 details these activity types and main programs.

**3.2.2 Exemplary Case: The EPL2GO Program** Digital literacy outreach through computer-based training effectively enhances low-income populations' reading and writing abilities and improves public digital literacy [20]. Edmonton Public Library' s digital literacy outreach service demonstrates innovation by using pop-up spaces to extend digital literacy services beyond library walls, aiming to provide safe, convenient, and accessible learning spaces for more people, particularly in remote, underserved, resource-scarce areas and for homeless individuals, persons with disabilities, and seniors. Launched in 2011, the program partners with Boyle Street Community to create pop-up spaces using literacy vans (EPL2GO Literacy Vans) at external branches. Pop-up spaces are physical venues outside libraries that house partial collections [21]. Edmonton Public Library uses these vans as mobile physical spaces to deliver low-cost, high-efficiency services. Each van contains digital equipment including a utility vehicle, smart robots, laptops, and various print and digital resources integrated with digital technology to support digital literacy services. Pop-up spaces connect digital services with remote communities, streets, and schools, allowing persons with disabilities and seniors to access digital resources and remotely register and borrow/return books, while providing homeless individuals shelter and digital literacy learning opportunities. Edmonton Public Library maintains high-frequency outreach of 15-16 times weekly, with 45-minute morning sessions and 2-hour afternoon sessions. To enhance efficiency, humanization, and precision, in April 2019 the library innovatively launched four digital literacy drones to deliver reading materials directly to seniors and persons with disabilities at home, creating a "barrier-free" resource channel. Public donations support this service' s sustainability, ensuring its continued role in cultural poverty alleviation.

### 3.3 Learning and Health Care for Children and Adolescents

Child poverty has long existed in Canada, with low-income working families limiting children's educational opportunities and health care. In 2005, Canada signed the *Early Learning and Child Care Agreement* [22], and in 2018 established the *Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework*, calling for provincial and federal cooperation to address child poverty.

**3.3.1 Service Forms** The four libraries segment service targets by age to meet diverse cultural needs. Vancouver Public Library divides groups into infants, toddlers, preschoolers, school-age children, and adolescents; Edmonton Public Library uses age brackets of 0-5, 6-12, and 13-17. Services for children and adolescents include four main types:

- (1) **Cultural Education:** Establishing children's reading and activity areas in libraries with programs such as film screenings, children's book clubs, writing and reading camps, and training courses. Toronto Public Library also operates volunteer service plans for youth.
- (2) **Consultation:** Creating communication environments and providing consultation services, including discussion circles, reading buddy activities, and youth advisory groups. Targeting middle and high school new immigrants and refugee youth helps them integrate and avoid psychological isolation.
- (3) **Health Care:** Focusing on parents of children and adolescents through seminars, caregiving courses, and story-sharing activities to comprehensively support children's physical and mental health and promote healthy development of infants and young children.
- (4) **Tutoring:** Since parents in impoverished families often lack time and knowledge for homework assistance, libraries provide learning spaces where school-age children can complete assignments after school with volunteer tutors. Examples include Toronto Public Library's Homework Help and Edmonton Public Library's Study Hall services. Table 3 summarizes these service types and main activities.

**3.3.2 Exemplary Case: After School Program** The After School Program is a crucial service for children and adolescents' learning and health care in Canada, incorporated into Ontario's poverty reduction strategy. Toronto Public Library uses youth hubs to support and extend this program, targeting 13-19-year-old students with diverse services after school and during summer vacation. Between 2015-2018, Toronto Public Library expanded nine youth hubs, reaching 11 by February 2019 [23]. These hubs are primarily located in Neighborhood Improvement Areas lacking services and resources. Toronto's *Toronto Strong Neighborhoods Strategy 2020* (November 2019) emphasizes engaging low-income families' children and adolescents in after-school services. Youth hubs

provide volunteer tutoring and regular activities including educational workshops, crafts, free learning and interest courses, and sports. In 2018, each hub served 50-60 students daily, with total visits reaching 70,000. The program is widely welcomed and effectively alleviates unequal cultural services for school-age children from impoverished families. Toronto Public Library plans to add seven more youth hubs in 2019-2020, prioritizing Neighborhood Improvement Areas to continuously serve low-income communities and families.

### 3.4 Cultural and Employment Support for New Immigrants

Population migration is a global phenomenon. Canada's national poverty reduction strategy identifies new immigrants—those who have moved to another country and not yet fully integrated into local language and culture or obtained citizenship [24]—as vulnerable to poverty. Over the past 25 years, Canada's immigrant population has increased significantly [25], including refugees from conflict zones like Syria, prompting government calls for inter-provincial and inter-organizational cooperation to provide employment support.

**3.4.1 Service Forms** Causes of new immigrant poverty include language barriers, cultural obstacles, unstable housing, and unemployment. Library services therefore encompass language support, settlement assistance, employment services, and other provisions.

- (1) **Language Services:** Building language learning environments through seminars (English learning circles, bilingual conversation circles, citizenship test preparation) and resources including ESL materials, International English Language Testing System resources, and family language kits in English and French.
- (2) **Settlement Services:** Providing housing assistance through website links to employment centers, immigration services, social service bureaus, and community loan foundations. Services include housing workshops, assistance programs, and one-on-one settlement support. Edmonton Public Library partners with Edmonton Immigrant Services to help new immigrants access housing, transportation, and medical information.
- (3) **Employment Services:** Stable employment alleviates low-income issues through: (a) seminars on business information, resume writing, job preparation, interview skills, and career exploration; (b) recommended resources such as Lynda.com, Learning Express Library, Gale Courses, and Career Cruising; and (c) professional career counseling. Table 4 details these services.
- (4) **Other Services:** Libraries provide cultural passes (community bus passes, Vancouver Inspiration Pass) granting new immigrants free access to museums and galleries, extending cultural services to low-income immigrant families.

**3.4.2 Exemplary Case: The Working Together Project** Funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada and initially launched in Vancouver, Halifax, Toronto, and Regina, the Working Together Project has Vancouver Public Library as a lead implementing agency since 2004, providing inclusive socio-cultural services for unemployed individuals and new immigrants to promote broad employment. Leveraging its information resource advantages, Vancouver Public Library established a dedicated Immigrant Information Center offering online and in-person employment information services, including: (1) employment guides compiled by library staff covering market information, career prospects, salaries, and industry website links; (2) free seminars helping job seekers develop resumes and business plans; and (3) entrepreneurship consultation and guidance. The center also provides settlement services for refugees, helping them find stable housing and health security while offering translation and language programs. Open seven days weekly, services are accessible via website, in-person consultation, phone, and email. Funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the center maintains close cooperation with British Columbia's Newcomer Services.

### 3.5 Security Services for Persons with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities (including visual, hearing, physical, intellectual, and mental disabilities) are a vulnerable group in Canada. The government established disability education funding and revised the *Accessible Canada Act* in July 2019.

**3.5.1 Service Forms** Services for persons with disabilities include:

- (1) **Resource Services:** Providing accessible collections is a core responsibility, including: accessible collections (braille books, newspapers, sheet music, e-books, large print), Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) resources (650,000 accessible items), Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY) resources, OverDrive audiobooks, and described video for visually impaired viewers. All four libraries provide 100% coverage of collections, CELA, and DAISY resources.
- (2) **Home Services:** For those unable to visit due to physical barriers or illness, including home library service, winter service (for severe weather), book delivery, and deposit collections at apartments, communities, and hospitals [26].
- (3) **Software Services:** Developing applications to improve service environments, such as Vancouver Public Library's screen reading software for visually impaired internet browsing and Ottawa Public Library's Key2Access app providing precise navigation information for safe travel. Other tools include color video magnification systems, screen magnification software, and text-to-speech programs.

- (4) **Information Services:** Providing website links to organizations like the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Canadian Council on Independent Living, and Ottawa Learning Disabilities Association, plus training guides and educational videos. Table 5 details these services.
- (5) **Other Services:** Vancouver Public Library organizes discussion circles for adults with developmental disabilities and their families, and designs an “Accessible Services Card” for free service access.

**3.5.2 Exemplary Case: Phone It Forward Program** According to 2018 data from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), visually impaired individuals face unemployment rates three times the national average, with 46% unable to use smartphones. In May 2019, Ottawa Public Library partnered with CNIB to launch the Phone It Forward Program, providing visually impaired individuals with opportunities to use smartphones for daily assistance. The program refurbishes donated smartphones, installs accessible applications (GPS navigation, print reading software, real-time video assistance), and redistributes them to reduce barriers in reading, travel, and emergency assistance. Public donations of idle smartphones to designated branches (libraries, corporations, shopping centers, streets) enable resource reuse. As enabling persons with disabilities to participate in the digital economy is a national poverty reduction goal, this program provides tools for internet access and expands digital service opportunities. Ottawa Public Library was the first globally to implement this project and plans continuous technological improvements and training to benefit more visually impaired individuals.

#### 4. Implications and Reflections for Chinese Public Libraries’ Participation in Targeted Cultural Poverty Alleviation

Since implementing targeted cultural poverty alleviation, Chinese public libraries have continuously explored and achieved results in research, regulation, and practice. Responding to national laws and strategies including the *Public Cultural Service Guarantee Law*, the *13th Five-Year Poverty Alleviation Plan*, and the *13th Five-Year Cultural Poverty Alleviation Implementation Plan*, the National Public Library Poverty Alleviation Working Committee was established in 2016. Libraries at all levels have organized cultural assistance activities, channeling resources and programs toward impoverished areas with stable overall progress. To deepen development, Chinese public libraries can draw beneficial lessons from Canadian practices in service philosophy, practitioners, and content.

#### **4.1 Deepen Social Inclusion Concepts to Create Open and Equal Service Environments**

Analysis of Canadian poverty reduction strategies at all levels reveals strong emphasis on social inclusion, with Ottawa [27], Quebec [28], and federal strategies all prioritizing inclusive services as poverty reduction goals. Social inclusion emphasizes that diverse social groups should have equal opportunities to enjoy public cultural services, eliminating social exclusion and unfair treatment [29]. This concept is integral to cultural poverty alleviation, particularly for vulnerable groups. Chinese public libraries have strong potential to promote social inclusion [30] through three approaches:

**4.1.1 Promote Service Equality and Encourage Individual Development** Segment library cultural poverty alleviation audiences, including age-stratified services for youth to address differential cultural needs across age groups. Provide equalized poverty alleviation services to low-income youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, and migrant workers, thoroughly understanding their poverty status and cultural needs.

**4.1.2 Improve Service Environments and Strengthen Balanced Spatial Layout** Extend services to resource-deficient urban areas through library pop-up spaces, distributing physical spaces across locations such as transit stations, communities, airports, and hospitals to provide reading services for homeless individuals and enhance urban inclusiveness.

**4.1.3 Strengthen Resource Allocation for Vulnerable Groups** Considering the needs of low-income families, unemployed groups, and persons with disabilities, libraries should continuously expand collections of practical skills, employment information, and accessible reading materials to ensure equitable resource allocation.

#### **4.2 Expand Cooperation Frameworks and Construct Multi-Agency Joint Poverty Alleviation Systems**

Analysis of Canadian cases reveals multiple practitioners in poverty alleviation projects, including service associations, hospitals, communities, and colleges. For example, Toronto Public Library's home delivery service for persons with disabilities allows online ordering with materials delivered to local communities for volunteer distribution, connecting multiple agencies and improving efficiency. As main practitioners of targeted cultural poverty alleviation, Chinese public libraries should encourage multi-stakeholder participation leveraging cultural, human, and financial resources to build diversified joint poverty alleviation systems.

First, actively explore cooperative service models guided by national policies. The August 2018 *Guiding Opinions of the CPC Central Committee and State*

*Council on Winning the Three-Year Action for Poverty Alleviation* emphasizes “mobilizing whole-society poverty alleviation enthusiasm” [31]. Libraries can serve as both lead agencies providing cultural services and partners in other organizations’ poverty alleviation projects. For initiatives like “Internet poverty alleviation,” “education poverty alleviation,” “employment poverty alleviation,” and “technology poverty alleviation,” libraries can identify entry points to complement health services, educational services, social security, and community volunteer services, forming integrated cultural poverty alleviation frameworks.

Second, strengthen public participation by inviting public input at practice seminars and consulting the public to reasonably plan poverty alleviation activities and strategies, while encouraging volunteers to support targeted cultural poverty alleviation practices.

### **4.3 Combine Foreign References with Local Realities to Optimize Targeted Cultural Poverty Alleviation Content**

Drawing from Canadian practices while adapting to Chinese realities can improve public libraries’ targeted cultural poverty alleviation content in four aspects:

**4.3.1 Emphasize Universal Multi-Literacy Education** Chinese public libraries’ multi-literacy education remains in its infancy, focusing primarily on information literacy [32]. Awareness of multi-literacy deficiency among the public is insufficient. Chinese libraries should: (1) recognize the close connection between multi-literacy education and urban poverty reduction, promoting relevant regulations that encourage libraries to address literacy deficiencies; and (2) conduct diverse literacy 普及 activities—digital experiences, exhibitions, knowledge competitions, seminars—to promote digital, health, career, and financial literacy, creating conditions for public participation in social development and preventing social exclusion.

**4.3.2 Create Healthy and Safe “Second Classrooms” for Children and Adolescents** Beyond school learning, libraries should leverage their social education functions to create healthy and safe “second classrooms” for children and adolescents from impoverished, single-parent, left-behind, and disabled backgrounds. These spaces should provide learning environments after school and during holidays, especially when parental supervision is unavailable, offering tutoring, crafts, and consultation activities. Expand children’ s activity spaces near communities and schools to truly achieve equitable distribution of cultural education resources, ensuring no child loses educational opportunities due to family poverty.

**4.3.3 Improve Employment Guidance Service Systems** Currently, few Chinese public libraries offer specialized employment guidance services, lacking

regular activity formats [33]. Employment guidance systems require improvement. Chinese libraries should shoulder responsibility for assisting unemployed populations including migrant workers, unemployed youth, and laid-off workers by: (1) enriching employment resources including company profiles, career guides, and employment databases, cooperating with government and enterprise HR departments to make library websites employment information channels (e.g., Ottawa Public Library's "Career Aim" resource section); and (2) conducting regular employment guidance training with professional instructors, establishing dedicated employment information centers, and organizing face-to-face employment consultations to gradually improve employment guidance systems and enhance job seekers' capabilities.

**4.3.4 Strengthen Intelligent and Digital Services for Persons with Disabilities** In providing barrier-free services for persons with disabilities, Chinese public libraries should emphasize technological innovation to ensure full enjoyment of modern information society's intelligent service achievements and achieve information accessibility. This includes introducing new barrier-free technologies, innovating assistive devices, and enhancing intelligent and digital service levels through customized smart terminals, voice recognition technology for digital players, audio resources, accessible digital films, e-readers, and screen reading/text magnification software. Regular training on blind computer use and accessible digital libraries should strengthen disabled individuals' capacity to use intelligent and digital services.

Cultural poverty is a global issue requiring close attention. Canadian public libraries demonstrate distinctive service features in universal multi-literacy education, children and adolescent learning/health care, new immigrant cultural/employment support, and disability security services. As China's poverty alleviation enters its decisive stage, public libraries' mission in targeted cultural poverty alleviation intensifies. Chinese public libraries should not only base their work on national conditions but also actively draw from international experiences to clarify work approaches, provide high-quality targeted services, and improve targeted cultural poverty alleviation systems for sustainable development.

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*Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.*

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